

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3496

UNCLAS LONDON 09645

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, FI

SUBJECT: U.K. MARKET FOR COLOR TV

REF: HELSINKI 2238

1. AS OF DECEMBER 1972, 18 PER CENT OF BRITISH HOMES HAD COLOR TV AND 93 PER CENT BLACK AND WHITE TV ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH RADIO AND ELECTRONICS COMPONENTS MANUFACTURERS FEDERATION. THIS WAS CONFIRMED BY THE LARGEST U.K. CONSUMER ELECTRONICS COMPANY (THORN) IN A STATEMENT IN JANUARY 1973 THAT 3.25 MILLION COLOR SETS ARE INSTALLED IN THE U.K. THORN PROJECTS 1973 TOTAL SALES FROM ALL SOURCES OF 2.5 MILLION COLOR TV SETS.
2. 1972 U.K. PRODUCTION OF COLOR TV SETS WAS 1.48 MILLION WITH THE ANNUAL RATE OF PRODUCTION GOING FROM 1.35 MILLION SETS IN JANUARY TO 2.08 MILLION SETS BY DECEMBER. IN ADDITION, A NEW THORN COLOR TV PLANT IN HULL COSTING 9.8 MILLION DOLLARS WILL START PRODUCTION LATER THIS YEAR. SONY HAS RECEIVED PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A MAJOR PRODUCTION UNIT AT SWANSEA, WALES. EIGHT SMALLER BRITISH MANUFACTURERS TOGETHER PRODUCE ABOUT 100,000 COLOR TV SETS PER YEAR. FROM THESE SOURCES WE WOULD ESTIMATE THAT TOTAL BRITISH COLOR TV PRODUCTION IN 1974 WOULD BE IN THE RANGE OF 2.5 TO 3.0 MILLION. THIS IS ESTIMATED TO BE EQUAL TO 1974 DEMAND.

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3. IN 1969 RCA FORMED A JOINT VENTURE WITH THORN (THORN

COLOUR TUBES LTD.) WHICH IN JUNE 1971 SET UP A PLANT COSTING 25 MILLION DOLLARS IN SKELMERSDALE. THIS PLANT WAS EXPANDED IN MAY 1973 AT AN ADDITIONAL COST OF 11.5 MILLION DOLLARS INCREASING PRODUCTION FROM 750,000 COLOR TUBES PER YEAR TO 1.2 MILLION. MULLARD (PHILIPS) OPENED A 25 MILLION DOLLAR COLOR TUBE PLANT AT DURHAM IN DECEMBER 1972 WHICH PRODUCES 1.5 MILLION COLOR TUBES PER YEAR, AND EXPORTS ABOUT 250,000.

4. BASED ON ABOVE, AND GIVEN RCA'S LARGE FINANCIAL INTEREST IN THORN COLOUR TUBES LTD., IT APPEARS DOUBTFUL THAT THERE WOULD BE A MARKET FOR RCA COLOR TUBES FROM FINLAND.

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